

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested. Claims 2, 6-16 and 18-19 have been withdrawn from consideration. Applicant has amended claim 1. No new matter has been added. Claims 1, 3-5 and 17 are currently pending.

Formal issues

The Office Action objected to the drawings because of various informalities. Applicant encloses herewith a Drawing Change Authorization Request with proposed changes to the drawings to obviate the rejection. Applicant has also amended the specification to clarify what the figures show. Withdrawal of the objection is therefore respectfully requested.

§ 102 rejection

Claims 1, 3-5 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,956,943 to Yamada et al. ("Yamada"). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to clarify that the invention includes a seal that seals the manually operable element relative to the trim panel to prevent moisture from entering a vehicle interior side of the trim panel. Yamada fails to disclose the claimed invention because the weather strip 8 shown in Yamada does not seal any manually actuatable element relative to the trim panel. The weather strip 8 seals between a window sash 6, a rear curved edge 7a of a support bracket, and a rear edge of a door panel (col. 4, line 56 to col. 5, lines 21), but it does not seal the door handle 5 relative to any trim panel.

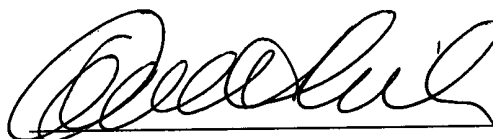
Applicant notes that Yamada does not disclose the claimed trim panel; the portion surrounding the opening in which the door handle 5 is attached is a bezel 9 that is formed as a part of the weather strip 8. As can be seen in Figure 5, the bezel 9 does not have a vehicle interior side; in fact, Yamada teaches using an interior garnish 11 to cover the bezel 9 and support bracket (col. 5, line 44 to col. 6, line 16). Further, the bezel 9 is not mounted adjacent the inner door panel 2d, as shown in Figure 1, and in fact does not even appear to be attached to the inner door panel 2d at all.

Because Yamada does not disclose a seal that seals a manually operable element relative to a trim panel to block moisture from reach an interior side of the trim panel, Yamada fails to anticipate claims 1, 3-5 and 17. Withdrawal of the rejection is therefore respectfully requested.

Applicant respectfully notes that claim 1 is a generic claim that reads on all of the disclosed species. Thus, Applicant is entitled to consideration of the non-elected claims if claim 1 is allowed.

All objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited. Applicant believes that no additional fees are necessary, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482 in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAIL

I hereby certify that the enclosed Response is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Mail Stop Non-Fee Amendment, Commissioner of Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on this 23rd day of July, 2003.



Beth A. Beard